



Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex

By Marita Golden



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“Don’t play in the sun. You’re going to have to get a light-skinned husband for the sake of your children as it is.”

In these words from her mother, novelist and memoirist Marita Golden learned as a girl that she was the wrong color. Her mother had absorbed “colorism” without thinking about it. But, as Golden shows in this provocative book, biases based on skin color persist—and so do their long-lasting repercussions.

Golden recalls deciding against a distinguished black university because she didn’t want to worry about whether she was light enough to be homecoming queen. A male friend bitterly remembers that he was teased about his girlfriend because she was too dark for him. Even now, when she attends a party full of accomplished black men and their wives, Golden wonders why those wives are all nearly white. From Halle Berry to Michael Jackson, from Nigeria to Cuba, from what she sees in the mirror to what she notices about the Grammys, Golden exposes the many facets of “colorism” and their effect on American culture. Part memoir, part cultural history, and part analysis, **Don't Play in the Sun** also dramatizes one accomplished black woman's inner journey from self-loathing to self-acceptance and pride.



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Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Golden paints an intimate self-portrait of her life as a dark-complexioned black woman and invites readers to take a behind-the-scenes look at the twisted and emotionally charged path of color-based discrimination that began when she was warned not to play in the sun. She succinctly details how the "light is right, black get back" mentality has permeated the African diaspora, its invasion of black institutions and how it sits just below the radar in Hollywood, athletics, news coverage and music videos. She includes stories from dozens of friends, acquaintances and experts, which as a whole suggest that blacks the world over may have been traumatized as much by colorism as they have by racism and colonialism. And with the grace of being faithful to one's own experience, Golden firmly plants her audience in her controversial dark skin. During a fifth-grade square dance, a popular young white boy rejects her black hand in disgust. At 19, in the wake of the black consciousness movement, Golden checks her face and Afro in the mirror and for the first time, "weeping with appreciation," "loves" what she sees" and goes on to form her own prejudices (since worked-through) against the lighter-skinned. Erudite, self-aware and thorough, Golden makes a knowing guide to thorny psychosocial territory.

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From [Booklist](#)

Golden, who has authored several fiction and nonfiction books on race and women's issues, offers a deeply personal account of growing up as a dark-skinned black woman. She had to cope with the internal politics of a social hierarchy based on color complexion among blacks that mirrors the hierarchy between blacks and whites in general. Golden recalls her mother's admonition not to play in the sun too long, for fear that she'd darken even more and hurt her prospects in life. Golden also recounts the liberating "black is beautiful" culture of the 1960s and 1970s that elevated black consciousness but ultimately didn't change the hierarchy. Recounting the progression from the paper-bag tests of black sororities through the "mulatto follies" that continue to dominate film images of black beauty, Golden applauds some recent developments, including the popularity of singer India Arie and her anthems celebrating the beauty of dark brown women. Golden's account of her personal journey to an appreciation of her looks offers a revealing look at a topic that is rarely discussed so openly. *Vanessa Bush*

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Review

"Superb. . . . An insider's view on the lasting impact of the color complex, which, after centuries, still governs the way blacks are treated, and even how we treat each other." —Nathan McCall, author of *Makes Me Wanna Holler*

"Erudite, self-aware and thorough, Golden makes a knowing guide to thorny psychosocial territory."—*Publishers Weekly*

"A potent meditation."—*Library Journal*

"Thoughtful and provocative. . . . Marita Golden shows us how ludicrous is the notion of "colorism" and the painful legacy it has created for us all." --Patrice Gaines, author of **Laughing in the Dark**

"A uniquely personal memoir. . . . Using the dualism that existed in her home, she takes us through her life

and describes how, even today, she is evaluated through the twin veils of race and color.” –*Ebony*

“As a youth in the early 1940s, I wrote a poem describing what I considered an ideal girl, [which] contained the lines: ‘Her hair is long, black, and silky,/ and she is high, yellow, fair.’ Truly, none of us are spared the marks of oppression. But some of us evolve. In **Don’t Play in the Sun**, Marita Golden displays with candor and insight her marvelous evolvment in the racially splintered concepts of color.” –Derrick Bell, author of **Ethical Ambition: Living a Life of Meaning and Worth**

“A deeply personal account of growing up as a dark-skinned woman. . . . Golden’s account of her personal journey to an appreciation of her looks offers a revealing look at a topic that is rarely discussed so openly.” –*Booklist*

“Marita Golden has written a brilliant, thought-provoking book. She voices the rage of brown and black girls who were taught to doubt their beauty . . . and she takes them with her on an emotional, transforming journey which celebrates self-love and self-acceptance. Ms. Golden is a healer, a griot attacking racism and self-hatred with wisdom, a lively spirit, and a generous heart. She encourages everyone to enjoy their days in the sun.” –Jewell Parker Rhodes, author of **Douglass’s Women**

“In this soul-searching, perceptive, and healing journey through the maze of the ‘color complex,’ Marita Golden challenges us to jettison the mirrors of the past, see ourselves through ourselves—and cherish the reflection.”—Paula J. Giddings, Professor of Afro-American Studies, Smith College, and editor of **Burning All Illusions: Writings from *The Nation* on Race**

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Paul Skeens:

Have you spare time for any day? What do you do when you have considerably more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the Mall. How about open or read a book titled Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex? Maybe it is to get best activity for you. You recognize beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have some other opinion?

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Patricia Gallagher:

The ability that you get from Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex will be the more deep you digging the information that hide inside the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex giving you buzz feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood by anyone who read the item because the author of this book is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We recommend you for having this Don't Play in the Sun: One Woman's Journey Through the Color Complex instantly.

Natalia Burton:

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